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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of a survey that focused upon responses from college faculty (N=33) and community professionals (N=56) in the following areas: the goals of higher education; success factors of higher education; attitudes and values held about higher education; gender discrimination in higher education; and perceived social status of college faculty members. Data collected from the study reveal the following: (1) both groups perceived that "to transmit knowledge" was the most important role of higher education; (2) success factors of college teachers were "classroom teaching" and "scholarly efforts" as viewed by college faculty, and "classroom teaching" and "producing new knowledge" as viewed by community professionals; (3) both groups viewed higher education as playing an important role in formulating student attitudes and values; (4) females from both groups reported that gender discrimination is a cause of concern (males were less concerned); and (5) faculty members perceived their social status as equal to or below that of other professionals, while community professionals perceived faculty members as having equal or higher social status to other professionals. Conclusions and suggestions based on the findings are provided. Contains eight references. (GLR)

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HIGHER EDUCATION CRITICISM: DO UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY PROFESSIONALS HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS?

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by

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HIGHER EDUCATION CRITICISM: DO UNIVERSITY FACULTY MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY PROFESSIONALS HAVE DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS?

Introduction

American higher education endeavors to perform critical functions such as identifying problems in society. It has the mission to advance the welfare for the many of the larger society (Nagai, 1975). In the mid 1970s, the core curriculum reform movement in higher education at Harvard emerged and soon spread over the nation's campuses. The movement identified one of the real purposes of higher education is to provide a "liberating" experience that would free people from self-centeredness, prejudice, and ignorance and thereby helps to transform the world into a place of infinite compassion where the "pursuit of happiness" would lead to justice and peace (Sprinthall & McVay, 1987).

College faculty members and community professionals serve different functions in the larger society. Their views of higher education faculty may influence the welfare of the society. There is little research regarding the comparison of viewpoints of higher education between faculty members and community professionals. The purpose of this study was to examine whether college faculty members and community professionals have different views regarding the functions of higher education. This survey focused upon responses of the two surveyed populations to the following areas:

1. the goals of higher education
2. success factors of higher education
3. attitudes and values held about higher education
4. gender discrimination in higher education
5. perceived social status of college faculty members

Perspectives

The Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1971) asserted that faculties should have appropriate roles in institutional governance. Based upon their experiences in governmental policy making, college faculty members may have impacts on the larger society (Nagai, 1975).

Opinions and expectations of policy makers in nine states about higher education were studied by Eulau and Quinley (1970). They found a "great faith" in higher education, an awareness that parents wanted higher education opportunities for their children, and strong support for the public service activities of colleges and universities. Faculty members' viewpoints about higher education and about their social status impact their teaching. There is a need to examine faculty members' judgments about factors which influence the success of higher education and faculty members' understanding of the goals of higher education.

In recent years, society expects education to be highly productive and to provide information for economic growth (Levin, 1991). Community professionals' viewpoints influence the policy making and their support to higher education. Therefore, community professionals' viewpoints of higher education need to be ascertained.

The purpose of this study was to examine the viewpoints of higher education

from the perspective of university faculty members and community professionals.

Literature Review

Educators traditionally have had an impact on students' lives whether the students are 18 or 80, whether the curriculum is undergraduate, graduate, traditional, nontraditional, liberal arts, or vocational. According to Dewey (1938, 1966) the main purpose of traditional education is to prepare the young for future responsibilities and for success in life. Therefore, general education should equip students to learn throughout their lives. Universities should prepare students not only for entry-level jobs, but also for career development to cope with the rapidly changing social and technical environment.

Historically, universities have been able to respond to changing national agendas, as with the space program beginning in the late 1950s and earlier, with a commitment to agricultural research and extension that increased America's crop yields far beyond any expectations (Jennings, 1990). At the end of the War World II. Lord Eustance Percy had offered a definition of higher education: it must be " a fully self governing community of teachers and students, working together in one place, with substantial endowments of its own, mature enough to set its own standards of teaching, and strong enough to resist outside pressures, public or private, political or economic" (Simmons. 1959). Therefore, higher education has the function of challenging individual and societal perceptions and values (Chiang, 1990).To fulfill the function, faculty members need to be aware of their inner values and their roles in the society (Weathersby, 1985).

Organizational climate has created and perpetuated inequity in higher education institutions (Katz, 1987). The discrimination issue has been a concern in higher education.

Population and Instrument

The population of the study was university faculty members who were from both state and private universities in the academic year 1990 in the State of Indiana. The areas included Fort Wayne, Muncie, Anderson and Marion, Indiana. The frequencies, percentages and genders for participating faculty members and community professionals are shown in Table 1. The frequencies and age distribution of faculty members and community professionals are shown in Table 2.

The questionnaire was developed by the research team. Face validity has been tested by two faculty members in Higher Education Department. Nine questions were generated in the five areas as shown above. Follow up non-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher to collect qualitative information.

Procedures and Methodology

Participation in this study was voluntary. Telephone calls and face to face requests were made before sending the questionnaire. Thirty-three college faculty members and fifty-six community professionals completed survey questionnaires. Questionnaires were followed by personal interviews that collected faculty members and community professionals' judgments regarding the five areas listed above.

These factors included the goals of higher education, success factors of higher education, attitudes and values held about higher education, gender discrimination in higher education,and perceived social status of college faculty members. Data were reported using frequency distribution. Responses to interview were reported in findings.

Summary of the Findings

Data collected from this study showed the following findings:

1. Both groups perceived "to transmit knowledge"was the most important role of higher education ($N_1 = 22$; $N_2 = 24$).

2. Faculty members reported "classroom teaching" (N = 10) and "scholarly efforts" (N=8) are factors to judge the success of college teachers. Community professionals perceived "classroom teaching (N=31) and "producing new knowledge" (N =17) are the success factors of college teachers.

3. Both groups responded that higher education plays important roles in formulating attitudes and values in students. ($N_1 =17$; $N_2 =21$)

4. Females from both groups reported there are enough cases of gender discrimination to cause concern ($N_1 =11$; $N_2 = 17$): Males from both groups judged gender discrimination is not a serious problem($N_1 = 14$; $N_2 = 24$).

5. Faculty members perceived their social status as equal to or below that of other professionals. Community professionals perceived faculty members as having equal or higher social status to other professionals.

Overall, the role of higher education in the society was highly valued by both university faculty members and community professionals.

Conclusions and Suggestions

Higher education in the United States has grown throughout its history (Carnegie Foundation, 1976). The future of higher education is more than usually dependent on the fiscal resources and on the interest of the people. The vast majority of survey participants seemed confident that the universities were evolving in ways that would enable universities to serve an important role in the society.

If institutional effectiveness, social responsibility, governmental accountability, and the preservation of a free society are the true goals of higher education(Millett, 1984), then through the effort and the common recognition of both university faculty members and community professionals, these goals can be fulfilled.

Based on the findings of this study, university faculty members need to be aware of their social status in society, and to understand the mission of higher education as perceived by community professionals. The issues of gender discrimination and the perceived social status of faculty from both groups provide divergent data regarding criticism of higher education. The researcher suggests the following recommendations in promoting the joint effort from both groups.

1. University faculty members should share their research findings and new

knowledge with community professionals in order to enhance the benefits to the society.

2. Community professionals should support faculty by sharing facilities and providing research and staff development grants in order to influence more effective instruction.

3. Both groups should be involved in policy making in improving the quality of higher education.

4. Affirmative action should be emphasized and ascertained in institutions through the effort of both groups in order to make productive use of manpower.

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Table 1

The Frequencies, Percentage and Gender of Survey Participant Faculty Members and Community Professionals

Gender	N1/N2	Percentage N1/N2
Male	20/30	60.61/53.57
Female	12/26	36.36/46.43
No indication	1/ 0	0.03 /0
Total	33/56	100/100

Table 2

The Frequencies, Percentages and Age distribution of survey Participant Faculty Members and Community Professionals

Age Range	N1/N2	Percentages N1/N2
21 and under	0/7	0/12.5
22-30	4/8	12.12/14.29
31-45	11/19	33.33/33.93
46-60	16/19	48.48/33.93
over 60	1/3	3.03/5.36
No Indication	1/0	3.03/0
Total	33/56	100/100

* N1 stands for faculty member; N2 stands for community professional.